

## ***Rallying Around Camp Ojiketa"***

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A Camp Fire property that for decades was a summer destination for thousands of Minnesota kids would be preserved as a regional park in a \$3.8 million deal with the Trust for Public Land.

The fate of Camp Ojiketa, on the shore of Green Lake at Chisago City about 30 miles northeast of St. Paul, worried hundreds of former campers who rallied to save it. Calling themselves the Ojiketa Preservation Society, they started an e-mail campaign and raised \$28,000 to help save the land from development.

"We view this as a very significant piece of property," Bob McGillivray, the TPL's senior project manager, said Friday. "I feel like there are a lot of people that really care passionately about this property, and I feel strongly that we can pull the money together to make this happen."

The TPL has until the end of the year to raise money to complete the sale. McGillivray said there is widespread interest in saving the land, and he said funding will come from grants and appropriations.

Chisago City then will buy the land, decide how to use it as a park and manage it. "We're excited," said City Administrator John Pechman. "We know we're taking on a big park. It will definitely be a challenge."

### **Thousands of campers**

The camp, which opened soon after World War I, has a beach, nature areas and dozens of log cabins sprinkled through a forest on a hill overlooking Green Lake. Thousands of girls -- and eventually boys -- came for nature hikes, arts and crafts and stories around the campfire.

"For the first time I feel that the deal will be closed, and Ojiketa will remain as a park for upcoming generations," said Judy Montgomery, who has led the group of former campers.

### **Time to sell had come**

The Minnesota Council of Camp Fire USA decided two years ago to sell Ojiketa because it no longer could operate four camps, said Andrea Platt Dwyer, the council's executive director. Camp Fire had hoped to sell the land for about \$5 million, but a declining real estate market made that impossible, she said.

Camp Fire is "thrilled to sell the land in a way that's going to preserve it," she said.

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